

GRADUATE THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

Online Course Syllabus

Introduction to Interfaith Spiritual Direction (Guidance)

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Spiritual direction has been called both an art and a science. Interfaith spiritual direction (or guidance) invites us to even greater artistry and skillfulness as we consider walking alongside people whose tradition is not our own. This course will explore the skills, mindset and heart orientation one needs to compassionately companion others in this way—to look beyond your own faith—to embark on a journey of deep ecumenism.

First, rather than a historical study of the world's various traditions and how we might become "expert enough" to companion someone from each (Native Traditions, Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam), we will explore the traditions through the lens of the themes/gifts they bring to the world. Each tradition emphasizes a different aspect of the spiritual life and quest. These themes, like compassion or spiritual discipline, invite us to look more deeply at the tradition and, at the same time, transparently examine our emerging views. This is done by cultivating warm-hearted curiosity and appreciation.

Second, as a new skillset for interfaith companionship unfolds, the student will assess their ability to hold space and offer presence to members of other faith traditions. Strengths, weaknesses and growing edges will be examined, along with the role vulnerability, humility, and courage play in serving as an interfaith spiritual guide.

At the end of this study, the student will be invited to share what vision of interfaith spiritual companionship they hold for themselves, their community, and the world.

THE PROCESS

Each week students will interact with the readings and write a 600-1000 word reflection on a specific topic given by the professor and receive feedback from her via email. Weekly papers should contain sources used. The student is encouraged to include additional sources which support the material. The course culminates with a 3000-4000 word final paper based on those reflections. Please review GTF paper guidelines here. <https://gtfeducation.org/paper-guidelines/>

REQUIRED READINGS (Selected chapters)

Addison, Howard A. *Show Me Your Way: The Complete Guide to Exploring Interfaith Spiritual Direction*. VT, SkyLight Paths Publishing, 2000. (Available on Amazon.com)

Mabry, John R. *Noticing the Divine: An Introduction to Interfaith Spiritual Guidance*. NY. Morehouse Publishing, 2006. (Available on Amazon.com)

RECOMMENDED READING

Mabry, John. *Spiritual Guidance Across Religions: A Sourcebook for Spiritual Directors and Other Professionals Providing Counsel to People of Differing Faith Traditions*. VT, SkyLight Paths Publishing, 2014. (Available on Amazon.com)

COURSE OUTLINE:

Before you begin, engage with these resources:

Read:

“Can Spiritual Directors Help?” New York Times article
<https://nyti.ms/3oyxAyh>

Locate:

The Pluralism Project of Harvard University
An excellent resource site which offers short articles and videos about 17 “Rivers of Faith”
<https://pluralism.org/religions>

For Lessons 2-6, you will be invited to spend time on this site, watching videos of your choice for the assigned traditions.

SESSION 1: Laying the Groundwork for Skillful, Benevolent Interfaith Companionship

Readings: Addison, Preface, Ch. 1, 2, 3
Mabry, Introduction

Assignment: Spiritual direction has been called both an art and a science. Considering what has been presented in this first session, how might interfaith spiritual direction invite you to even greater artistry and skillfulness? What are the key takeaways from Addison and Mabry as you consider how you might companion others?

SESSION 2: Looking Beyond Your Own Faith

Reading: Addison, Ch. 4
Mabry, Ch. 1, 2

Engage: Locate the sections on Native Traditions and Taoism
Pluralism Project of Harvard University
<https://pluralism.org/religions>
Choose a few (or several!) to watch that pique your interest.

Assignment: What are you being invited to as an individual— *on a human level as well as a spiritual level*—if you are to companion those who may hold different religious views than you? What early skills necessary to good and skillful interfaith spiritual direction (as illuminated by the authors) are you being invited to cultivate?

SESSION 3: Cultivating a Compassionate Heart

Readings: Addison, Ch. 5
Mabry, Ch. 3, 4

Engage: Locate the sections on Hinduism and Buddhism
Pluralism Project of Harvard University
<https://pluralism.org/religions>
Choose a few (or several!) to watch that pique your interest.

Assignment: What are the key take-aways from this session? What would a formal relationship with a seeker (member) from the featured traditions (Hinduism and Buddhism) invite you to? Transparently assess your ability to hold and offer presence to them. What are your strengths in this area? What are your weaknesses or growing edges?

SESSION 4: Multiple Ways of Knowing

Readings: Addison, Ch. 8
Mabry, Ch. 5, 6

Engage: Locate the section Zoroastrianism and Judaism
Pluralism Project of Harvard University
<https://pluralism.org/religions>
Choose a few (or several!) to watch that pique your interest.

Assignment: What are the key take-aways from this session? What do the two major themes brought forth by Mabry (Covenant and Discernment) invite you to as someone who needs to “hold sacred space” simultaneously for yourself and for others within the context of the spiritual direction relationship?

SESSION 5: Bringing Healing to a Broken World

Reading: Addison, Ch. 6
Mabry, Ch. 7, 8

Engage: Locate the sections on Christianity and Islam
Pluralism Project of Harvard University
<https://pluralism.org/religions>
Choose a few (or several!) to watch that pique your interest.

Assignment: What are the key take-aways from this session? Describe your unfolding understanding of the role vulnerability, humility, and courage play in serving as an interfaith spiritual guide, along with any other necessary “skillsets” that are making

themselves known to you at this time.

Session 6: An Interfaith Vision for Today and Tomorrow

Reading: Addison, Ch. 7, 9, Epilogue
Mabry, 9, 10

Engage: Locate the sections on
Pluralism Project of Harvard University
<https://pluralism.org/religions>

Choose a few (or several!) to watch that pique your interest.

Assignment: How have the voices of Mabry and Addison (along with any others you've discovered during this course of study) impacted your emergent views about companioning people of various traditions? As this study comes to an end, what vision of interfaith spiritual companionship do you hold for yourself, your community, and the world?

Final Paper:

Your paper should be a summary of the 6 weekly papers. It should also include the following:

Reflect on your learnings about what it means to offer spiritual direction through an interfaith lens. What is required of a director/guide to be able to serve in this way? What mindsets, heart orientation, and skills have you been invited to deepen or expand as a result of this course? Identify your strengths as well as your growing edges. How do you see yourself engaging in the field of interfaith spiritual direction going forward?

Other Resources You Might Find Helpful:

Interfaith Cooperation: An Invitation for All Beliefs | Elizabeth Sink | TEDxCSU
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JffbkeVURZI>

The Laundromat (Short Film on Interfaith Dialogue)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=au_9ctuya8M

Interfaith Dialogue with the Interfaith Amigos TEDxRainier
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=soC_MSUo5Qo

Fr. Thomas Keating on the Spirit of Interreligious Dialogue
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H0QKupTCWMA>

12 Session, Self-Paced Course offered by Spiritual Directors International: "Exploring Spiritual Companionship Across Traditions"

<https://www.sdicompanions.org/product/exploring-spiritual-companionship-across-traditions-online-self-paced/>